

# MINISTERIAL ABILITY: X

A SERMON

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

South Carolina Conference, .

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necessary to proclaim the "glad tidings." In order that the world may hear and believe, obviously there must be preachers. And the speciality of their office consists in this very thing: they are preachers that they may deliver a spoken, clear, emphatic, living testimony, before the face of all men. Such an office and function enters as a necessary element into the constitutional scheme and grand design of the New Covenant. Without it, the gospel makes no progress in the world; and Christianity, in its practical influence on mankind, varies much according to the character, zeal, devotion, and intelligence of its preachers.

This being so, we may observe that God has not left to the chances of human things the origination and perpetuation of this ministry. At first, the primitive preachers were called directly by Christ in person. Since his ascension, it is the office of the Holy Spirit to move men inwardly to take upon them this ministration. A Divine call is necessary to the authority of the ministry. Who has any right to intrude into such an office? to take it up as he would a learned profession? or, simply on the ground of ecclesiastical authorization, to consider himself invested with the rights which belong to the sacred office? Who gave thee this authority? is a fitting challenge to all who minister in holy things. Christ has not delegated to the Church the prerogative to call men; but only to judge of the proofs furnished of a Divine call, and, if satisfied, then to send out the preacher.

The sufficiency of the Christian ministry, thus appointed, is distinctly and peremptorily of God. In several respects may this be noticed.

1. The *intellectual* fitness for the work of preaching is of the highest consequence. "Covet earnestly the best gifts." It is not so much that learning, power of abstract thought, keenness and subtlety of philosophic vision, strength of masculine grip in argument, or lofty sweep of imagination, are required for this work. These rare faculties may indeed be pressed into the service, and become valuable auxiliaries. But I wish to observe that these, or whatever other intellectual faculties may be brought to this ministry, cannot of themselves render a man fit—*sufficient*. To preach the gospel aright, a man must understand it. To understand it, there must be a *love of truth* awakened in the soul—of the truth which even

condemns—of the truth which casts down all lofty imaginations, and brings them into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Now, this is the result of a direct operation of the Spirit of truth upon the soul. Not only then is the body of revealed truth a gift of God—which no research could have found out apart from direct revelation—but a clear and sound understanding of the truth is a spiritual endowment; the spirit of a sound mind being as distinctly a gift of God, as the spirit of power, or of love.

But, secondly, this is made more obvious by the consideration that the processes of experimental religion are indispensably necessary to such a comprehension of the doctrines, motives, influences, and sanctions of the gospel, as shall make one an able minister of the New Testament. How shall he warn the sinner, who has never felt the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and found out the plague of his own heart, or had vivid discoveries of the awful consequences of sin? How shall *he* press home upon the conscience the necessity of repentance, who has never yet himself repented?—or lead the awakened conscience, thoroughly alarmed, to the cross, directing the wandering destinies of the soul to the ground of settled peace and stable confidence, who has not himself been pardoned? These are the things of the Spirit of God: the natural man cannot discern them: they demand a spiritual vision; and this is the result of a direct visitation of God upon the soul. Let the preacher lose this—lose his hold upon God, and how speedily does dimness gather over his spiritual eyesight! How quickly does his zeal abate—his tenderness pass away—his love for souls decline—his faith become a mere intellectual process, instead of a living, mighty, glowing realization of eternal things! Now, these are the special elements of character that go into the constitution of a true, able, successful minister of the New Testament. You see how impossible it is that an unconverted man should be such a minister: how impossible that a backslidden man should succeed in such a work: how dependent we are upon God, every day, every hour, for our sufficiency! The intellectual grasp of a giant in mind, apart from these sources of sufficiency, is as the weakness of childhood, for the accomplishment of the great ends of the Christian ministry. Eloquence and learning of the highest order fail, where unaided human ability attempts the task. As soon might the

strains of military music wake the dead who sleep their long sleep on some hard-fought field, on the warrior's last bed of rest, as the words of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument, but who has no hold on spiritual influence, on the invisible sources of celestial power, wake the slumbering conscience, and rouse the sinner from his fancied security. A special accompanying influence from the Spirit of God is necessary to render the ministrations of the gospel vital and effectual.

Our sufficiency, then, is obviously of God. Divine influence must be *in* the word preached: must be upon the spirit of the preacher. His mind, whatever its native breadth of capacity, whatever its acquired fulness of knowledge, must be in vital connection with the Source of all truth, in direct communion with the Spirit of God, who originally gave the word, and who now makes it "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of joints and marrow." God makes us "able ministers." This will further appear from the *nature* of the New Covenant. Ministerial "ability" must be judged of from the character of that dispensation which puts under contribution the services of Christian ministers. What is this? The text graphically informs us. To perceive it fully, we must contrast it with the Old Covenant. That was the ministration of *law*: it stood mainly, and of necessity, in the *letter*. By minute prescription, Divinely authorized, it laid down a variety of external services. These were to be scrupulously performed: ablutions, sacrifices, varied rites of worship, an imposing round of ceremonies. The whole system was rudimental in its character, and not ultimate: adapted to the childhood of man's religious nature, rather than its full development: in a word, it worked *ab extra*, inwards. See how different the case is with the New Covenant. In opposition to the former, it begins from *within*, and then works outward. A deep consciousness of sin leads to repentance: this carries the soul on to faith in the "sacrifice once offered:" faith leads to justification and adoption; and regeneration is the result. Holy affections are produced in the soul; and obedience, from a sincere, renewed, and loving heart, is the final product. This is the sum and substance of the matter. The service of God, then, stands not in the oldness of the letter—in forms, and rites, and out-

ward things, done *for* a man, or *by* a man; but in the newness of the Spirit—in the renewed tempers of the heart, which with freedom, spontaneity, the gush of devout joy, the spirituality of inward conformity to the Divine will, consecrate the soul to God. “This is the Covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”

2. The Old Covenant was the ministration of “condemnation”—of “death.” It was written and engraven on the two tables of stone. It laid down a law: it gave a rule of life: to fail in obedience was to incur the penalties of that law; and these penalties were death. It contained no provision of pardon. Its language was, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” “And the law is not of faith; but the man that doeth them shall live in them.” On the other hand, the emphatic proclamation of the gospel was pardon for sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: pardon for a reason: pardon not by works or sufferings of our own, but by faith in Christ crucified; and pardon so administered as to secure righteousness, both on the part of the Divine government, and also on the part of the justified sinner. Emphatically is it the ministration of righteousness. On this pivot turns the whole system: to this point converge all its forces: here concentrate all its advantages. Its divinity shines out precisely here. The fulness of glory rests in effulgent beam upon this aspect of the gospel. Other religions may build temples more magnificent; may parade rites more gorgeous; sweep pontifical processions more august and imposing; may boast of a higher philosophy, more powerful eloquence, more secular strength and influence. None, no not one, pretends to accomplish for man what his solemn and urgent wants demand: none offers a *righteousness* worthy of the capabilities of his soul: a righteousness adapted to his condition as a fallen sinner: a righteousness piercing to the inmost core of the moral nature: rectifying all the disordered elements of that nature: cancelling the sense of guilt: plucking out the sting of remorse: inclining the will to the choice of holy obedience: turning into sweet humility the proud rebellion of the heart: purifying the conscience: ennobling the affections: restoring

the balance of moral forces: a righteousness which can and does

—“Control

The earthquakes of that universe, the soul:  
Pervade the depths of passion: speak once more  
The mighty mandate, guard of every shore,  
Here shall thy waves be stayed: in grief, in pain,  
The trembling poise of reason's sphere maintain.”

3. The Old Testament was *temporary*: and, in striking contrast, the New Testament is the perfected, permanent form of the dispensational fulness of grace. The discipline of the Law, and the appointments of the Levitical ritual, tended necessarily, in the case of the pious Jew, to the conviction that the character of his dispensation was only preparatory to some higher manifestation of truth. He could not fail to see that the “gifts and sacrifices” of the Law “could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience;” but the clearer his insight into the true nature of the service of God, the stronger must have been his persuasion of the necessity of a “better covenant, established upon better promises,” and offering a more available atonement than the blood of bulls and of goats. The prophetic revelation carried his mind forward still more clearly from the region of symbol and outward prescription into a sphere of religious influence of a more spiritual and interior character. Thus the system, by its own tendencies, showed its temporary nature. It served its purpose—to prepare the way for Christ; and then it waxed old, and was ready to vanish away.

On the other hand, the gospel proclaims the *real atonement* for sin made by the death of the Son of God. Its provisions looked to the purification of the heart, symbolized by the sacrifices and lustrations of the law. Its great promise was the “promise of the Spirit:” the source of inward illumination, renewal, and sanctification to all true believers. This dispensation is *final*. It points to nothing in the future more available to sinful man, for all the moral wants of his nature. It contains no elements of decay: it anticipates no ampler discoveries of spiritual truth: it gives no intimation of augmented blessings in store for man on his pilgrimage to eternity: it precludes no new gospel holding in reserve clearer credentials. Its testimony is sealed, and its sublime verities

are so settled and fixed, that no vicissitude can affect, no time outgrow them. In its dispensational fulness of grace and promise, of revelation and rule, "it stretches itself out to the utmost limit of mortal interests!" It shall endure coevally with man. Every breath we draw, every moment we exist, every step we take, is beneath this dispensation of grace. To us it calls, and it shall accent the last syllable of recorded time. Its trumpet of jubilee shall never be silenced, save by the trumpet of judgment: its light shall never fade, but in the embers of the last conflagration: its "joyful sound" shall never die, except in the uproar and crash of dissolving worlds: its "lively hope" shall only be buried in the grave and under the wreck of the universe. All things must be destroyed, ere it lose its power or abdicate its claim. It lasts while the heavens and the earth last. It only ceases when the mountain sinks, when the ocean dries, when the poles refuse to turn, when the skies shrivel up like a burning scroll, when heaven and earth shall flee away. And even then, its dispensational form alone is affected: its principles are invariable and indestructible—are of the things which cannot be moved, and shall extend through a more congenial medium and worthy economy, whose sphere is the highest, whose glory is in light, and whose consummation is "God, all in all."

This being the general character of the gospel, as contradistinguished from the law, it is not surprising that St. Paul lays such stress in the text upon the "spirit," in contrast with "the letter." It is a vital point in the subject. As Christianity when compared with Judaism is the spirit in opposition to the letter, so in Christianity itself—in the Scriptures of the New Testament—there may be observed a "letter" and a "spirit." Christianity as an intellectual system has its *theory*: it teaches certain doctrines: these may be scientifically arranged, expressed, and sought to be understood. Its theology may be turned into a mere philosophy—matter for speculative inquiry—matter for system-building—matter for keen dispute among thinkers. The interpretation of its records may give play to the science of hermeneutics; and the resources of profound erudition may be laid under contribution to establish the genuineness of those records; and the process in both cases may be nothing more than the exercise of critical skill.

Or, secondly, inasmuch as Christianity has its forms of religious service, its ordinances, its ritual, especially its sacraments, these, by a Judaizing tendency of the human mind, may be fixed upon as subjects of special and paramount interest and importance. Or the *Church idea* may develop itself—that, namely, which invests the visible Church with a sacramental character, as if it were in itself a depository of grace, and possessed the privilege of spiritually quickening those admitted by sacramental ordinances to its pale. Thus it is claimed, not merely that the Church, ministerially and instrumentally through her custody and preaching of the word, and by perpetuating the apostles' testimony concerning Christ, holds an important office in relation to human salvation—the true doctrine—but, more than this, it is claimed that she has the power to render the means of grace effectual to salvation: that union with her is the primary means towards union with Christ, and precedes instead of following the living faith which saves the soul.

Now, such views as these carry us back to Judaism, somewhat improved and amended, but still Judaism: an external institute, working from without, inwards, the formative instrument of the inward life. We are brought round to the operation of the old principles once more—a ritual worship, and a legal or ceremonial righteousness: that is, we are still in the region of “the letter which killeth.” The spectacle is a touching one, to see multitudes of our fellows living in the midst of the appliances and means, the calls and motives of the gospel, and unaffected by them all: passing from youth to maturity, and to the sere and yellow leaf of life, busied with the things which perish, but allowing themselves no time to heed the things which make for their peace: alive to the ephemeral interests and pleasures of time, but dead to all the stupendous realities of their immortal being. To them the gospel is hid: the god of this world hath blinded their minds. I confess that I am still more affected by the case of the worshippers of the letter, who, after all, fail to see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. There have been men of various and extensive erudition, who have spent years of hard study, and produced folios of acute criticism, on the sacred text. They have ransacked libraries, museums, and monasteries, in search of ancient codices, and been at infinite pains to calculate vari-



ous readings, and note minute discrepancies. They have busied themselves with what one of them calls "the problem of the criticism of the evangelical history:" just as men of secular learning have expended similar labors on the problem of the authorship and construction of the Homeric poems. But in regard to how many of them are the words of Jesus as just as reproving: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes!" Man's great business with the gospel is to find a Saviour there: to learn how the favor of God may infallibly be obtained, and the awful futurities of his being made happy. How deplorable is the result when Christianity becomes a mere matter of scientific and philological speculation—its *letter* scanned and studied, measured and weighed, its living spirit unobserved, uncaught: its saving health unfelt, its renewing influence never sought, its true glory veiled; and these worshippers of the letter content under the shadow of the eclipse.

For a monitory illustration of all this, I might refer to the case of the younger Michaelis, one of the most celebrated of modern German scholars and biblical critics. In his Introduction to the New Testament—a monument of prodigious learning and philological research—there is manifest a deep-rooted antipathy to all spiritual religion. Scorning the pretensions of more illiterate Christians to a gracious influence from the Holy Spirit, he avows it as his experience that he never felt any special influence from the Holy Ghost during the whole of his life. Dr. Chalmers's remark on this case is worthy of being repeated: "The most profound acquaintance with the letter of Scripture, even though carried to its minutest and before undiscovered niceties, is no guaranty whatever for the respect in which we hold those great and momentous doctrines which are accessible to all, and the property of all; and thus our veneration for an accomplished philologist and critic, may invest with a most dangerous authority his contemptuous allusion to such articles of faith as enter into the very life and substance of the New Testament."

Not less wonderful is the folly of mere formalism, when such a system as the gospel is in our hands. "We conclude, then," said St. Paul, at the close of one of his masterly trains of argumentation, "that a man is justified by faith without

the deeds of the law." That conclusion was the death-blow to superstition, whether in its moods of terrific asceticism, or its goodly round of ceremonial observances. Why need I grope in the dark to find God; or carry the case to priestly negotiation, or seek *pseudo* mediators, or bind myself to painful and costly ritual observances, when the gospel scheme of justification offers me pardon and peace, and all the attributes of the justified state, as the result of simple faith in Christ? Salvation is in *Him*, not in *them*. The "letter" has answered its great purpose when it has led me into the presence of the "Spirit which giveth life."

The ability of the Christian ministry must be judged of by the foregoing facts and principles. The extent in which it is subservient, in the scheme of Divine mercy, to the accomplishment of the ends contemplated in the gospel, is the measure of its ability.

He is an *able* minister of the New Testament, who so feels that his dependence is *on* God, and his sufficiency is *of* God, as to maintain a vital and constant communion with the Source of all light and power, life and strength. This dependence on God, this humble seeking of the promised aids of the Holy Spirit, is indispensable to a ministry which aims at lifegiving results. Our strength lies not in the logical force, the symmetrical arrangement, the ornate illustration, the mighty, methodical march, of compact ideas, or the far-flying range of an imagination whose pinions never droop. The deep and powerful preaching which moves the heart of man, comes from the heart itself—deeply moved by spiritual influence: by vivid realizations of eternal things: by the consciousness and sensitiveness of the moral life in full play: by the emotions of compassion and love, born of that inner essence which lies deeper than the rational faculty, and with the perceptions of which the imagination does not intermeddle.

He is an able minister who carries into his preaching a genuine and vigorous *faith*. Is his sufficiency of God? Is he positively sure that the message he delivers is the word of God? Has he a real hold on unseen, spiritual strength—upon the energy of the lifegiving, renovating Spirit? This man comes forth prepared to find the gospel ministry, in his hands, a remedial function. He stands at an immeasurable distance above the position of him who makes his office an organ of mere de-

lection to a listening audience—a Sunday recreation to which intelligence and taste, argument and rhetoric, are brought to furnish the banquet. Over and above the natural fitness which earnestness and impassioned feeling on the part of the speaker possess to move his listeners, we need not hesitate to affirm that the preacher's *faith* is the grand conductor of spiritual influence to his congregation. Let it be a *loyal* faith, which cleaves to the truth and puts honor upon the cardinal peculiarities of the New Testament: let it be a *realizing* faith, which sees "Him who is invisible," and feels the vivid impression of heaven and hell: let it be an *intrepid* faith, which marches with firm foot, and unfurled banners, wet with the dews of Calvary; whose battle-word is "Christ for the world, and the world for Christ;" which quails not in the face of the world's greatness or beauty, its intellectual pride or hoary sins;—and that faith becomes the vehicle of Divine power: vivifies the gospel testimony: opens a way for it to the hearts of the listeners; and makes it a savor of life to them that believe, or justifies in the sinner's own conscience, who rejects it, the final doom.

He is an able minister who does not content himself with the knowledge or experience of former years, but, magnifying his office, and reading aright the signs of the world's progress, and pondering the new developments of hostility to the truth thrown up from the fermenting mass of modern society, seeks an ever-fresh baptism of spiritual power: puts his mental activities into intense action: "covets earnestly the best gifts:" goes down, year by year, deeper and deeper to the foundations of truth, both in nature and revelation: traces principles in their remote relations: strives to obtain comprehensive views as well as large sympathies; and thus puts himself in connection with the age in which he lives, and keeps abreast with the men of his time. Abreast, I repeat, and not behind: remembering that the "wisdom of winter is the folly of spring." This must be done, or the ministers of Christ must be content to relinquish the hold which their office as public teachers gives them upon the mind and public opinion of the time and country. Their reading should be various, their reflection profound. They must be men of study, as well as observation. Whatever early advantages they may have enjoyed, must be improved by habits of after application; and

in the absence of special scholastic advantages, redoubled zeal and activity should be put forth. If ignorant men should presume to think that by their want of mental improvement they are specially honoring the riches of the Divine grace, you, my brethren, have only to say to them, in the pithy words of South: "If God hath no need of our learning, he can have still less of your ignorance." What! Is this work of preaching your Heaven-designated vocation—the dignity of which warranted Jay in saying, "I would rather preach the gospel than blow the resurrection-trump!" Is the pulpit you occupy a secret place of thunder; and the themes of redemption you handle, so glorious, so gigantic, that a "Sanhedrim of archangels might listen to them, uncovered of their golden crowns?"—and will you not make that work the very business and problem of your life: binding yourselves to it, pressing into its service every energy of mind, every susceptibility of taste, every throb of consciousness? Will you not place it first and foremost among those thoughts which hold court in the high places of human intellect, and seek, by every possible accomplishment of solid reasoning, exact method, and eloquent delivery—by industry, order, dogged perseverance, and habitual decision of character, and especially by a spirit of constant and fervent piety, to make full proof of your ministry?

There may be found, perhaps, young preachers, who have fallen into a mistake not unfrequently observable in the walks of literature and science: that, namely, which supposes that preëminent distinction is the result much more of genius and talent, than of patient painstaking and unflagging industry. These are day-dreamers, the victims of revery and self-deceiving musings. They are to scale the heights of divine philosophy by a single leap; and set the world to wondering at their eloquence, by the *afflatus* of inspired genius, caught off-hand, from the sight of some vast crowd of listeners. They affect magniloquent words, which cost no trouble, and an inflated pomp of expression, which is the flimsy drapery of poor ideas. They drink in with greedy ears the pretty flatteries of small admirers; and are almost astonished at their own imagined greatness. Presently they are surprised, not to say indignant, that they are not intrusted with the first posts of responsibility; and complain that distinguished ability like theirs

has been overlooked by Bishops and Presiding Elders. Now let me just say here, that men of first-rate ability are too much needed in the Methodist Church, to allow a moment's apprehension that they will or can be overlooked. Such men always, in our system, take the rank to which their real efficiency entitles them. It is an impossibility that masculine strength and genuine power should be undervalued in the practical working of our itinerancy. But it is not by any means impossible that a man of showy but superficial parts should be mistaken as to his own claims. The Church wants men who, by God's blessing, have made themselves *able* ministers by steady intellectual labor, and by patient and systematic application to self-appointed tasks: men who break resolutely through the spells of self-flattery, and the slothful drivel of day-dreams: men who know that the price of eminent ability and distinguished usefulness is nothing less than invincible labor, and are willing to pay that price, and summon their energies to the work—*and succeed!*

I state results: before this audience it is unnecessary that I should do more than just advert to the law by which, in the great procedures of the spiritual life, Divine influence goes along with, but does not supersede, the most strenuous human effort. You, my brethren, are accustomed to trace the working of this great law, in the more elementary processes of repentance, prayer, faith, in the every-day experience of Christian life. It holds good in the highest applications. Our sufficiency is of God, who makes us able ministers. But this sufficiency is realized only to the extent in which we coöperate with the Divine agency. God makes us able ministers, but this ability comes not by chance: not by the operation of an inscrutable Divine sovereignty: not as the premium upon an indolence which folds its arms and waits the good pleasure of the ascended and glorified Head of the Church: it comes as all other spiritual endowments come—by God's blessing crowning our best exertions. And the practical rule by which we work in the highest departments of Christian effort, as well as in the most elementary, is to do our utmost, just as though we had every thing to accomplish by our own agency; and to pray, and believe, and depend on Divine aid, just as though *we* had nothing to do, and the Divine agent every thing. This is the law of the composition of forces,

human and Divine, no less true, no less applicable in the spiritual world, than the law of the centripetal and centrifugal forces in the natural.

Ministers of the South Carolina Conference: the past year has been remarkable in our annals. It has witnessed the death of four superannuated and two effective preachers, members of the Conference, besides the death of one of the Bishops, long identified with this body as a co-laborer. We look around, and miss the familiar faces of our departed brethren. We mark the unusual chasm which the lapse of a single year has made in our ranks. Their graves admonish us that the time both of preparation and effective work is short and uncertain. Could they speak to us from the azure fields of immortality, with what thrilling emphasis would their words of fire exhort us to diligence and faithfulness—how would their celestial accents heighten the grandeur and urgency of our work!

Of this group of departed ministers, there are several who present aspects of character which justify a special mention, and render appropriate the brief and affectionate tribute to their memory with which I shall close the present discourse.

All that is mortal of WILLIAM CAPERS rests beneath the shadows of that church in which we last saw him and heard him. In all the elements which make up an able minister of the New Testament, he was preëminent. A deep personal experience of Divine things lay at the foundation of his ministerial character. Upon his spirit rested an "unction from the Holy One," and he "knew whereof he affirmed." He had realized the words of Christ to be "life and power;" and with life and power he delivered those words to the thousands who hung upon his eloquent lips. To preach Christ crucified was the sole business of his long and useful life. He surrendered to this the full strength of an acute, cultivated intellect, which would have achieved fame and fortune in any of the secular walks of professional life. He possessed a broad knowledge and keen observation of the world, that had been carried over a tolerably wide range of conditions. His diction was felicitous, embracing a rich and copious flow of appropriate words, and a delivery so chaste and finished, that the most fastidious ear could detect no violation of the canons of good taste in any of his discourses. His face was classical, his voice full

of music, and his gesticulation eminently appropriate to the oratory of the pulpit. Grace, elegance, and refinement, penetrated with force and fire, were his characteristics. He never courted or cared for popularity, though it always attended his steps. Long an unquestioned leader in the Conference within the territorial limits of which he was born and died: honored with the highest office in the gift of the Church he had served so long and so efficiently, he went to his rest in the fulness of years, and amid the tears of sorrowing thousands. He has put off the harness of war in the Church militant, to wear the crown in the Church triumphant.

JAMES DANNELLY, too, meets with us no more. Peculiar in appearance, manner, and voice; unique in the structure of his mind and the mould of his genius; dauntless as a lion; bravest of the brave—his was the ministry of mighty rebuke to popular vices. To the clerical eye, human nature usually presents its Sunday side. We see it in its dress of decencies, and in the demureness of conventional proprieties. Dannelly had looked upon its week-day, darker side: had scanned its frailties, watched its wretched perversities, and taken the gauge of its deepest depravities. When he stood forth to reason of “righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come,” his was no idle pomp of words, no holiday parade of bugle and banner and blank-cartridge. Stern, sententious, hitting, his words blistered as they went, and his denunciations tore with terrible effect through the ranks of Heaven-daring sinners. His merciless scourge sounded, like the reverberations of thunder, after the retreating steps of vulgar iniquity. His sarcasm, keen as the spear of Ithuriel, pierced the bloated mass of whitewashed hypocrisy. In the spirit of the Tishbite, he hewed in pieces the sophisms of the scoffer and unbeliever, and routed the baffled priests of Baal. William Capers was the keen, polished, Damascus blade: James Dannelly was the ponderous battle-axe. They stood, in many respects, at opposite poles, each a master in his own sphere. Each followed the bent of his native genius: both were needed in the sacramental host.

I have dwelt upon the prominent trait in the mental and moral development of Dannelly: you must not understand that the “spirit of power” in him was antagonistic to the

“spirit of love.” Both of these endowments are necessary to ministerial efficiency; both proceed from the same Divine Spirit, and exist in the higher unity of the spiritual life. The power of rebuke was levelled, in Dannelly’s case, against the sin; while a yearning pity and love went after the sinner, that fain would “pluck the firebrand from the flame.” At times, how touchingly tender and eloquent! We have all heard his apologue of the old man in the tottering house, waiting for the signal of its fall, then escaping from the tumbling ruins, and hastening with glad and speedy steps to enter his kingly home. Ah! well may we apply the moral of the story to his own case now. That mutilated body, so long the seat of aches and pains, that earthly house of his tabernacle, lies a darkened ruin: he has entered “the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Of the five other ministers of the Conference who have died during the present year—all of them in the faith of Jesus, and in sure and certain hope of life everlasting—I must ask the liberty to make brief mention of the youngest—Harris, who has finished his course while yet in the greenness of his young and flourishing life. I do this because he furnishes to the junior preachers of the Conference a fine model of an able minister of the New Testament, although not distinguished, as the venerable men I have just referred to, by eminent endowments, or marked peculiarities of genius. His greatness lay in his fitness for plain, constant, hard work. He belonged not to the kid-glove, maiden-voiced, *petit maitre* school of delicate young clergymen, fastidious and nervous, and afraid of soiling their broadcloth in a camp-meeting altar, and extremely skittish on the subject of a “hard circuit.” Harris, on the contrary, was a man of all-work—good in the Sunday-school cause, good to beg money for missions, good to preach day or night, to many or few hearers, Sunday or week-day, wet or dry; and O how good as an intercessor, to plead with God in mighty prayer when the penitent and heart-broken knelt around him! His zeal led him into labors beyond the measure of his strength, manly as it was. He put his full mental and physical energy into every sermon, as though some intimation prophetic of an early close to his ministry was ever present with him. And he fell in his early prime and pro-



mise—a martyr to his work, surrendering, without a sigh or regret, life itself, to that noble cause in the service of which alone life was felt to be valuable to him.

Come forward, ye scores and hundreds of souls who have been brought from darkness to light, from the burden of sin and sorrow to the knowledge of salvation and the unutterable hope of heaven, through the instrumentality of those honored and laborious ministers who have fallen during the present year, and tell this congregation whether these true successors of the apostles acted wisely and well, in leaving all to follow Christ? Tell us whether the true Wesleyan breed of men still survive? Tell us whether money or politics, influence or fame, crowns or kingdoms, are worthy to be mentioned by the side of the true and lofty and fadeless glory which girds the brow of a faithful and able minister of the New Testament? You will tell it ere long, in the face of a burning heaven and a dissolving world; when “the great white throne”—

“Rolling on wheels of burning fire,”

makes its appearance, and the dead, small and great, stand before God! In the revelations of that great day when the Divine plan and purpose in the framing of the world shall be made manifest; and it shall be seen that more was designed in the fiat which created, and the power which wound up its mighty springs, than merely to set another gem upon the flashing brow of the firmament, and to rear another home for an intelligent race: it shall then appear that creation was but a magnificent platform for redemption—that as all things were made *by* Christ, and *for* him, this earth was meant to be the theatre of his advent when manifest in the flesh, the arena of his humiliation and his triumphs, the monument of his power to save to the uttermost, and the focal point of interest to the universe. Then, too, it shall be seen that, rising in importance and moral majesty above all the investigations of men of science, and all the proud achievements of warriors, and all the sagacious diplomacy of statesmen, and all the bright, immortal productions of men of letters—preëminent above them all in the heraldry of the universe, in the concentrated glory of noble achievement and enduring result, is the ministry of the gospel of the ever-blessed God! Then “they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”

## A FISHER OF MEN.

WRITTEN BY C. WESLEY, BEFORE PREACHING IN CORNWALL.

TRUE Witness of the Father's love,  
 Celestial Messenger Divine,  
 Come in thy Spirit from above:  
 The hearts which thou hath made incline  
 Thy faithful record to receive,  
 That all may hear thy voice and live.

Send forth the everlasting word,  
 The word of reconciling grace,  
 That all may know their bleeding Lord,  
 The freely proffered gift embrace,  
 Hang on the all-atoning Lamb,  
 And bless the sound of Jesus' name.

Jesus, thou only hast the key,  
 Open the great effectual door,  
 Extend thy line from sea to sea,  
 And glorify thy mercy's power:  
 Redeem the wretched slaves of sin,  
 And force thy rebels to come in.

Now to thy yoke their spirits bow,  
 Thy way into their hearts prepare,  
 Be present with thy servants now,  
 With me, thy meanest messenger,  
 Who humbly at thy bidding come,  
 To call my fellow-exiles home.

Fisher of men ordained by thee,  
 O might I catch them by thy love!  
 Thy love be first bestowed on me,  
 And while the pleasing power I prove,  
 My tongue shall echo to my heart,  
 And tell the world how good thou art.

Teach me to cast my net aright,  
 The gospel-net of general grace;  
 So shall I all to thee invite,  
 And draw them to their Lord's embrace,  
 Within thine arms of love include,  
 And catch a willing multitude.

O might I every mourner cheer,  
 And trouble every heart of stone;  
 Save, under thee, the souls that hear,  
 Nor lose, in seeking them, my own;  
 Nor basely from my calling fly,  
 But for thy gospel live, and die.